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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001672

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: ISCI STRATEGIC DIALOGUE: SECOND POLITICAL  
COMMITTEE MEETING FOCUSES ON COALITION PRESENCE

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1604

[B](#). BAGHDAD 1587  
[C](#). BAGHDAD 1532 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (S) Summary: At the second meeting of the political committee of the U.S.-ISCI (formerly SCIRI) strategic dialogue, ISCI members briefly discussed their recent conference. A discussion of a CoR petition calling for a timetable for coalition withdrawal ensued, with PolCouns urging ISCI leaders to use their influence to prevent a negative outcome in the CoR. ISCI CoR members claimed that no one from ISCI or Badr signed the petition. While agreeing it was negative, they also stressed the need for coalition forces to reduce "provocations" against Iraqi citizens, including unwarranted detentions. Constitutional Review Committee chairman Humam Hamoudi also called for U.S. help in convincing Kurdish leaders to accept compromises on Kirkuk and the division of authority between the regions and the central government. End summary.

[2](#). (S) The meeting took place on May 15. The ISCI participants were Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi (chair); CoR members Sheikh Humam Hamoudi, Sheikh Jalal al-Din al-Sagheer, and Ridha Jawad Taqi; and advisor Mohammed Hadi al-Asadi. The U.S. side consisted of PolCouns (chair), Embassy Legal Advisor, Regional Affairs Officer, and PolOff. The committee chairs agreed at the end of the meeting that each side would present ideas for topics before the next session.

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ISCI Conference  
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[3](#). (S) The meeting began with Abdel Mehdi turning the floor to al-Asadi for a summary of the results of ISCI's recent conference (ref B). Asked by PolCouns if ISCI's post-conference statement indicated a turn from Khomeini to Sistani as the leading religious authority, Hamoudi replied, "We need to respect the highest religious authorities in Iraq, and Sistani now represents that authority. If the high authorities have a position, we must follow that position. If not, ISCI will take its own position." Abdel Mehdi then reiterated the general principles ISCI observed, reading off a paper he gave post at the beginning of the dialogue in November. PolCouns said that the U.S. generally subscribed to the same principles and wanted to see a long term relationship develop based on those principles. "We appreciate your evolution from a resistance organization to a leading political party," she continued, "and while we respect the religious basis of your identity what is important to us is your political vision."

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¶4. (S) Invited by Abdel Mehdi to turn to an issue at hand, PolCouns raised the petition circulating in the CoR calling for a timetable for coalition withdrawal (ref A). She noted that the CoR could send a very negative message to those engaged in the U.S. in the debate on Iraq if it passed a resolution demanding a timetable for coalition withdrawal. Could ISCI, she asked, use its influence to manage this issue in the CoR so that it does not harm our shared interests. Since it appears that the Sadrists will continue their efforts to push such a measure through the CoR, she continued, perhaps with ISCI leadership a measure could be passed that mirrored the GOI position that coalition withdrawal would occur as ISF increased their capabilities.

¶5. (S) Al-Saghir adamantly denied that any ISCI or Badr members signed the petition. Yet he noted that there was a growing feeling in the CoR that it should become involved in the question of the presence of coalition forces, and he claimed that "the provocations" of coalition forces were causing heightened sensitivity. "We need your help in reducing the feeling on the street that many detentions are not justified," al-Saghir continued. Abdel Mehdi noted ISCI's position, as expressed in its recent platform (ref B), that the presence of the coalition forces was temporary and that the training of Iraqi security forces needed to be accelerated. He said it would take further work with other groups in the CoR to develop the correct perspective on the issues raised by the petition. Taqi observed that many Shi'a CoR members had the perception that Iraqi leaders did not control the security file. PolCouns replied that the security file was in a process of transition, with Iraqi forces assuming greater responsibility every day.

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Constitutional Review Update

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¶6. (C) Hamoudi closed with a brief read-out of the status of constitutional review. He said that committee leaders had agreed on several measures to strengthen the authority of the central government in the areas of water, ports, customs, and oil. There was also a suggestion that Kirkuk be given special status as its own region for five years, during which time the borders would be defined and after which time its citizens could choose whether to join another region (e.g., Kurdistan). Hamoudi noted that both of these issues (Kirkuk and strengthening central government authorities) would be sensitive for the Kurds, especially for Masoud Barzani. He called for Embassy help in convincing Barzani to accept these modifications. Calling the committee's suggestions encouraging, PolCouns said that the Embassy would work to support compromise suggestions as long as there was clarity over the content of the proposals.

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